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## PUBLIC WORKS:

December 2021 No 153

# Scotland in UNISON

scottish council activists' bulletin..... Use these stories in your branch newsletter or circulate the pdf version to members

# 150,000 call for action on climate change



By Stephen Smellie  
Scotland depute convener  
and UNISON rep at COP26

**A** hundred and fifty thousand people marched through Glasgow demanding action to stop climate change on 6 November, among them UNISON general secretary Christina McAnea and thousands of UNISON members.

Meanwhile COP26 delegates met to seek an agreement that would put the world on track to meet the target of keeping global warming to the 1.5 degrees above pre-industrial levels set in Paris in 2015.

Members came from all over Scotland and beyond to join thousands from the international trade unions, indigenous peoples from the Americas, Asia and Africa, farmers, campaigners on climate justice and migrant rights, and young people with Greta Thunberg among them.

In rain and wind, it took five hours for the back of the march to arrive in Glasgow Green, having been applauded and cheered through the streets.

Among the Trade Union and Workers bloc, UNISON banners and placards were to the fore demonstrating the leading role our union is taking in addressing climate change issues.

### UNISON report

This was emphasised a couple of days later when Christina launched UNISON's report *Getting to net zero in UK public services - the road to decarbonisation*.

This report sets in motion campaigning and bargaining within every public sector organisation to reduce the reliance on fossil fuels that cause global heating and to secure the government funding that will be necessary to achieve it.

As Christina said: "The cost of moving across to greener public services won't come cheap, but there's not a moment to lose."



PHOTO: JULIE BROADFOOT

**'The cost of moving across to greener public services won't come cheap, but there's not a moment to lose'** CHRISTINA MCANEA

I was privileged to represent UNISON within the COP26 as part of the delegation of observers from the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC).

Their efforts were focussed on securing the commitments to a Just Transition to a net zero carbon economy involving workers and their unions.

That aim was successful, but with the UK and other countries failing to engage in the social dialogue necessary, it is clear we will need to fight for a genuine Just Transition in each country.

The ITUC also supported the demands of nations of the Global

South and climate justice campaigners that the \$100 billion promised to the developing nations in 2020 should be delivered, that recognition should be given to the loss and damage suffered by those countries who have contributed least to the climate change happening now, and that there should be full engagement of all stakeholders, local and indigenous people, women, disabled people, young people and workers.

Not all of that was achieved, with promises to deliver later, maybe next year or the year after.

The key aim of COP26 was to ensure that the world was on track



General secretary Christina McAnea launches UNISON's report *Getting to net zero in UK public services - the road to decarbonisation* in Glasgow on 8 November after previously joining the young people's march and the 6 November march.

to ensure we achieve the 1.5 degrees Paris target.

At the end of the conference many were disappointed as, while that may still be achievable, the delays in reducing emissions now mean that a lot more drastic actions will be needed in the future.

UNISON members, branches and negotiators can play their part in getting on with the task of meeting the climate change targets, taking their lead from the 150,000 on the streets of Glasgow rather than the conference hall of the COP.

## STUC: Put women's equality at heart of political agenda

This was the call from UNISON's June Maguire at the STUC Women's Conference in October.



She was joined by Katrina Murray who slammed precarious work driving women into insecurity, poor quality jobs and poverty, while Davena Rankin stressed that the women's committee should 'reflect the diversity of our unions and society'. On climate change, Davena also warned that a Just Transition must promote the role of women.

Full reports are on the website at [unison-scotland.org/stuc-women-2021/](http://unison-scotland.org/stuc-women-2021/)

## Colleges celebrate living wage accreditation

Scotland's college sector is celebrating its achievements as accredited Living Wage Employers.

The sector-wide move towards Living Wage Accreditation is a first for a sector in Scotland. It will mean that staff working in Scotland's colleges, whether directly employed or contracted via a third party, receive the real Living Wage for their work. This means that all staff, irrespective of their employment status, will receive upwards of the current hourly rate of £9.50 an hour.

The announcement comes after confirmation that the 22 signatory colleges to the agreement established to facilitate National Bargaining in Scotland's college sector, have all been named as Living Wage Employers by Living Wage Scotland.

Chris Greenshield, Secretary of the UNISON Scotland Further Education branch, said: "We are delighted on behalf of the many outsourced workers in FE working in (but not exclusively) cleaning, security and catering who have struggled for many years on low pay and who provide such a critical service for our students and staff."

"This was on the agenda at the very first meeting of the national bargaining machinery in October 2014 and we are pleased to have reached this important milestone."

"We welcome this achievement and note that it shows that the national machinery can make a real difference to the working lives of our staff if we have the collective desire to do so."

"We believe we still have more to do to improve the terms of conditions of outsourced workers in colleges and hope that the employers will work in partnership with us to do so."

Shona Struthers, spokesperson for the Employers' Association, said: "The news that all 22 signatory colleges in Scotland are now Living Wage Accredited is testament to the sector's commitment to investing in and supporting the invaluable staff that we have."

"We will continue to work in partnership with the trade unions to take forward the National Bargaining agenda."

# UNISON strike threat secures new offer for hard pressed council workers

The threat of escalating strike action from UNISON members across Scotland has secured an improved pay offer from COSLA.

The union has suspended strikes while members are consulted in a ballot which runs to midday on 29 November.

The offer comes after UNISON had threatened to call out school cleaners, school caterers, school janitors, waste, recycling and fleet maintenance service workers for five days of strike action in councils across Scotland as part of escalating action.

Johanna Baxter, UNISON Scotland head of local government said: "This improved pay offer

**'This improved pay offer rightly puts more money into the pockets of those on the lowest pay'**

JOHANNA BAXTER

rightly puts more money into the pockets of those on the lowest pay.

"We have moved the amount of money the employer is offering those on the lowest pay up by a third and secured an additional £86m of investment into the pay bill since the original offer."

"55% of local government workers earn below £25k per annum and the flat rate increase secured for those workers is the highest uplift in a single year

settlement for the lowest paid that has ever been achieved and is higher than those on equivalent pay points received in the NHS."

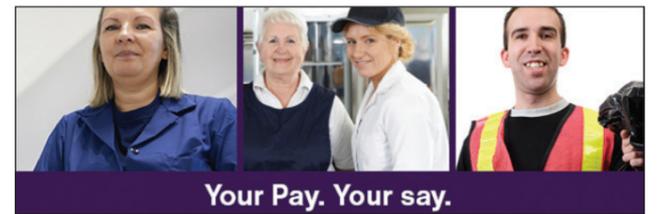
"The increases for those on median and higher rates of pay are in line with the wider Scottish public sector pay policy and agreements reach in other public sector organisations."

"There is still a lot of work to be done but we will continue to lead the fight to improve the terms and

conditions for members in the forthcoming 2022 pay review."

Mark Ferguson, chair of UNISON Scotland local government committee, said: "It's disappointing that UNISON members had to threaten to go on strike to achieve this."

"Local government needs a new deal. We need to invest in local services and those who work in local government need their value properly recognised in the years to come."



# 2022 to be Year of Disabled Workers

UNISON has dedicated 2022 to a year-long campaigning and organising strategy to support and celebrate disabled workers, reports the Scottish Disabled Members Committee (SDMC).

The preparations for this have been long in the pipeline at national and regional levels. Scotland has a particular interest in this as the original motion came from UNISON South Lanarkshire local government branch.

The SDMC workplan for 2022 will focus on raising awareness and providing information and training to equip our stewards with the knowledge and confidence they need to challenge poor policy and management.

It's equally essential that we challenge the stereotypes and assumptions in the workplace - including among ourselves - of what disabled workers can and can't do, and views of what's regarded as a 'reasonable' adjustment.

MSP Pam Duncan-Glancy is launching UNISON Year of Disabled Workers at UNISON's December Scottish Council to kick-start its promotion.

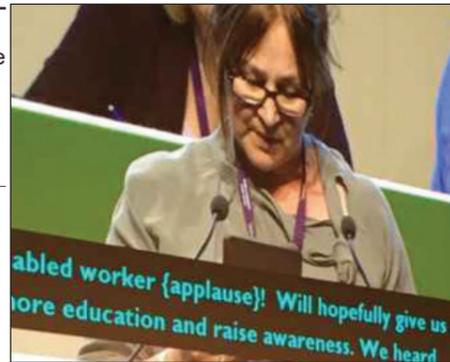
The SDMC will signpost branches and stewards to any guidance, events, or promotional materials that the National Disabled Members' Committee has organised and our own 2022 workplan will include:

- Development and roll out of disability training modules.
- Webinar input on reasonable

South Lanarkshire's Karen Strain moved the motion for the Year of Disabled Workers at UNISON National Conference in 2019.

adjustments available to branches, on request.

- Series of webinars covering a range of topics.
- Guidance on accessibility at virtual meetings for hearing impaired/deaf members.
- Survey of attitudes to disability.



- Publication of our regular newsletter.
- The SDMC is keen for branches to support this work and to make a commitment to

undertake an activity of their own during 2022, as a demonstration that they are actively supporting and promoting disability issues in the workplace.

The committee is also there to help support branches with that and would love to hear about any planned activities!

Regular updates will be found on the SDMC's Facebook page, and branches and stewards can also make contact directly with the committee through this: [www.facebook.com/UNISONScotlandDisabledMembers](http://www.facebook.com/UNISONScotlandDisabledMembers)

## Social care staff shortages at 'critical level' UNISON tells Holyrood

Staff shortages have left the social care sector in crisis, John Mooney, UNISON Scotland lead officer for Social Care, told Holyrood's Health and Social Care Committee in November.

He warned that action is needed now to deal with shortfalls and that this should involve not just better rates of pay but golden hellos and loyalty payments for those already in the sector.

These calls came out of a UNISON survey of care where 97% of respondents said that their workplace was currently experiencing a shortage of staff. 90% said that they were

**'This can't wait for a new National Care Service. We need action that will get us through the winter'** JOHN MOONEY

concerned about the safety of colleagues and service users because of the staff shortage and 35% said that they were considering leaving the sector.

John added: "Everyone knows things are difficult in Social Care - but the results of our survey are truly alarming."

"As the Covid-19 pandemic continues and remains with us during the flu season, this staffing crisis has the potential to become a very real health crisis for those receiving, and working in, social care."

"Care workers are getting burnt

out coping with the issues that understaffing causes, to the extent that almost a third of the workforce are considering leaving."

"We need urgent action from authorities at every level to keep carers in care - this can't wait for a new National Care Service. We need action that will get us through the winter."

"We are suggesting golden hellos and loyalty payments. People need more than claps and rainbows - and politicians need to actually value carers rather than just saying they value them"

## SDS four day week 'message on a bottle'

By Ben Myles  
UNISON SDS Branch

UNISON's Skills Development Scotland (SDS) branch believes that healthy working lives and a greener future are ideals worth investing in. This was the inspiration behind their 'Message on a Bottle' campaign.

The branch has sent all of their

members a reusable Four Day Working Week water bottle to help them keep hydrated in an eco-friendly way throughout their working day.

They also included a flyer, explaining why the branch feels that their employer supporting a move to a four day working week would have an even bigger impact on members' wellbeing and the environment.



The branch has asked UNISON SDS branch members to share pictures of their bottle in a selfie or showing off some of the things they would enjoy doing with their extra day away from work and has received a wide range of submissions from their members, celebrating walks

along the beach, extra time with family, and settling down with a good book.

Soon, these will be pulled together into a collage to demonstrate the enthusiasm that SDS Branch members have for the four day working week - and the positive impact that this day off could have for employee wellbeing, the environment, and local communities.

## UNISON fight against 'culture of fear' makes national media

**If ever there was an advert for the power of change through unionisation, this is it.**

That was the view of the Daily Record reporting on the publication of the review into culture and governance in the Emergency Department of Forth Valley Royal Hospital (FVRH).

The review came out of concerns reported by members to the branch. Members told UNISON reps that they felt bullied and intimidated, frightened to speak up to management about their concerns about the delivery of safe patient care, high turnover of staff and other issues.

Managers had consistently failed to recognise and to take

action to address any of the issues highlighted by staff.

As such NHS Forth Valley had failed in its duty to ensure the provision of a safe environment for both staff and patients in the Emergency Department.

Karren Morrison, UNISON Forth Valley NHS branch secretary said: "Due to the serious nature of the allegations, the chief executive commissioned an independent review to investigate the allegations.

"The hard-hitting report highlighted several serious failings within the department.

"It provides a critique of where things have gone wrong and makes comment on corporate, clinical and staff governance. It is also critical

**UNISON will continue to fight for members' fundamental right to a safe working environment and to be treated with dignity and respect at work'**

KARREN MORRISON

of a lack of oversight and safe staffing levels which continually fell below expectations within the nursing workforce.

"It made a massive 45 recommendations including strengthening leadership, reviewing department staffing as well as improving relationships, information sharing, staff



engagement and partnership working.

"UNISON Forth Valley is now pushing to ensure our employer swiftly and effectively implements, in full, the recommendations from the report."

Karren added: "The good news is our members have been telling us that although it is early

days, the atmosphere is starting to feel safer.

"On the back of this success our branch stewards are continuing to communicate with members to support those facing similar challenges and continue to update our skills and practice to effectively challenging bullying and harassment in the workplace.

"UNISON will continue to fight for members' fundamental right to a safe working environment and to be treated with dignity and respect at work.

"We would encourage any member of staff to talk to us if they are worried about anything at work especially if they feel unwilling or unable to raise these issues with managers."

## Investment in social work critical to keep the Promise

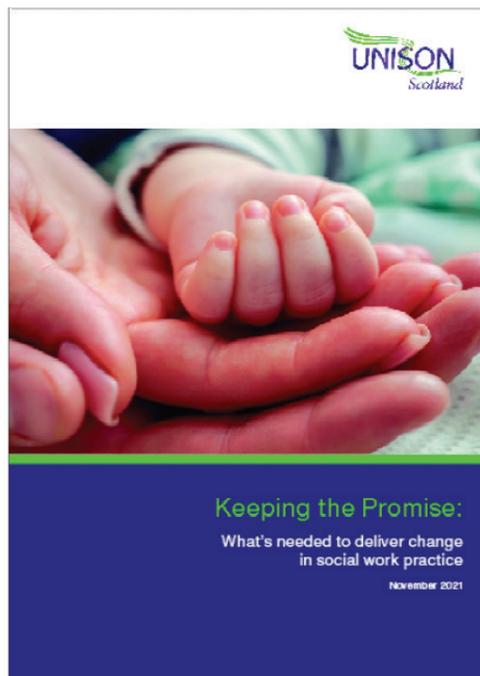
By Susan Galloway  
Information & devt officer

**A significant uplift in government funding is needed to transform the care system for children say UNISON members in children and families' social work.**

UNISON's Social Work Issues Group (SWIG) has launched a major report on their survey of social work members and heard that lack of resources is the main cause of children's needs not being properly met.

The Promise, the report of the Independent Care Review, is about improving the experience of children and young people and the Scottish government has pledged to implement it in full.

Social work staff say the major barriers to the type of practice children have asked for are lack of staff, lack of time, high caseloads, growing



complexity within caseloads and the managerialist culture within social work.

"It's a culture that's computer

**'Three quarters said their team is under-staffed and the majority said decision-making about children is resource-led rather than child-led'**

centred, not child centred," said John Watson, of SWIG.

Social work staff told UNISON that they strongly support The Promise but are sceptical it will be delivered without long needed investment in local authority social work services.

Three quarters said their team is under-staffed and the majority said decision-making about

children is resource-led rather than child-led in the final instance.

"It's really vital that social work staff have a voice if we are to make sure that the Promise is implemented in a way that really delivers what children and young people have asked for," said Stephen Smellie, chair of SWIG.

"UNISON is discussing the survey findings with the Scottish Government and it's important that UNISON branches are involved in the delivery of the Promise by local authorities."

See the full report at [unison-scotland.org/social-work](http://unison-scotland.org/social-work)

## Pension talks to resume at Dundee University as strike action pays off

**Following prolonged strike action by members of UNISON, Unite and the UCU, the joint trade unions have struck a deal with the University of Dundee that will allow pension talks to resume.**

UNISON members had been on strike for three weeks, with the final three days of strike action being withdrawn.

UNISON branch secretary Phil Welsh said: "We are delighted the university has stepped up and realised that their plan for pension reform was flawed.

"We ran a short consultation with our members, and they have accepted the proposed way forward. We are now ready to

**'if a defined contribution scheme reappears, then our members will recommence strike action'**

MO DICKSON

negotiate with the employer on a defined benefit pension which will not plunge our members into a retirement of poverty.

"The branch is really grateful for every message of support they have received so far, and want to thank everyone for all the strike fund donations we have received across the union."

Organising the strikes, the joint trade unions also received



support from local and national politicians, including a cross-party motion passed by Dundee City Council condemning the university's original plans and urging them to seek an alternative which provided dignity in retirement.

UNISON regional organiser Mo Dickson said: "Our members have accepted the framework for negotiations

which will provide a real chance to negotiate a defined benefit scheme.

"Our members have shown great industrial strength, but they understand that recent developments may not resolve this dispute entirely. We hope that

talks to explore defined benefit alternatives will commence this week and continue until February at the earliest.

"However, UNISON is in the process of re-balloting members as the current strike mandate expired on 13 November. So, if a defined contribution scheme reappears, then our members will recommence strike action."

## EQUAL PAY Unions tell Glasgow City Council 'Don't dump the deal'

**As we went to press, Glasgow City UNISON alongside the GMB and Unite was conducting a series of consultative strike ballots after Glasgow City Council threatened to rip up the 2019 equal pay compensation deal for future payments and to exclude jobs that were previously paid out.**

Brian Smith, Glasgow City UNISON branch secretary, said: "Future equal pay compensation payments are now under threat. This is not about a delay until 2024."

He warned that there are around 8,000 UNISON members currently working in job titles paid out in 2019.

"Why won't the council agree to the same settlements going forward? There is no moral or political justification for such behaviour," slammed Brian.

"Thousands of workers, overwhelmingly women, were paid out in 2019 because their pay was unequal - nothing has changed since then, it's still unequal. The same jobs in the same unequal pay scheme. Yet the council is now refusing to pay up and trying to exclude many jobs.

"The council's actions are a cynical ploy to divide trade unionists," he added.

"We must now build a campaign for strike action amongst all members working in these jobs - there are £100Ms at stake across the workforce. UNISON is co-ordinating with the GMB and UNITE trade unions and calling on all our members to vote YES for strike action."

If you work in Glasgow City Council and have not lodged an Equal Pay claim and wish to, then contact [e@unison.co.uk](mailto:e@unison.co.uk).

If you have any questions regarding an equal pay claim which has already been submitted, contact your lawyer.

# BLACK HISTORY MONTH 2021 REPORTS

## Authentic voices in the fight against racism

By Kate Ramsden

SiU editor

**A**berdeenshire UNISON celebrated October's Black History Month in the company of David Lammy MP and Kay McKerrill, branch secretary of Orkney Islands Council UNISON.

Organised by the branch's Black members self-organised group and chaired by Black members officer Benson Mugenyi, participants heard two excellent speakers who brought their authentic voices to the event.

David spoke of his childhood growing up poor and black in Tottenham.

Raised by a single parent mum, a nurse who came over with the Windrush generation, and a member of NUPE, David praised the union for giving his mum access to the training that helped put food on their table. He is a UNISON member himself.

He spoke of the fatigue that many feel after years of fighting against racism. "The problem is not blackness,"



said David, "It's whiteness."

"It's important to know your history, know where you've been and know where you're going so you can stand firm on the ground," said David, adding that when times are tough, you know there is always someone in your ancestry that's had it tougher than you but got through it so that future generations would

have a better life.

Reflecting on the struggle ahead he warned that the structures of racism took hundreds of years to build. "At its heart is power," said David. "It's a struggle but with each generation it gets better - it will come."

Kay described a very different life experience from David, where she did not face discrimination and adversity.

**'We all have a role to play in challenging racism'**

KAY MCKERRELL

However she emphasised that whatever our background, skills and experience we all have a role to play in challenging racism.

"I may not be the 'triumphing over adversity' inspiration and role model, I may not be the 'high-profile activist' challenging leaders on the front pages. But, we do not all need to be the grand embellishment of the design.

"Some people enrich everything by slowly but surely strengthening the base fabric. Helping others weave their own pattern and challenging those who would try and diminish the colourful contributions of others," said Kay, urging all Black members to get involved with the union and with self-organisation.

## When Mandela came to Glasgow and the legacy of Oliver Tambo

By John Stevenson

Retired member & NMSMF trustee

**T**he Nelson Mandela Scottish Memorial Foundation (NMSMF) celebrated Black History Month with videos marking Scotland's links with two legends of the struggle against apartheid in South Africa.

The videos are part of an education and awareness programme alongside the NMSMF's campaign to build a statue of Nelson Mandela in Glasgow - a campaign supported by UNISON Scotland.

A video on 9 October marked the anniversary of Mandela's visit to Glasgow in 1993 to collect the Freedom of the City awarded to him in 1981 when he was still in prison.

He also collected the Freedoms of Midlothian, Aberdeen, Dundee and five other authorities in England and Wales.

In his acceptance speech, Mandela famously said: "Whilst we were physically denied our freedom in the country of our birth, a city 6,000 miles away, and as renowned as Glasgow, declared us to be free."



Oliver Tambo, Glasgow Green 1988



Nelson Mandela, George Square, 1993

**'The apartheid system was based on white supremacism and cheap black labour making vast profits for the West, led and supported by Britain over decades'** BRIAN FILLING

Later he added that, while in prison: "it (the Freedom) made us realise that the world hadn't forgotten us."

The video includes archive footage of the visit and a first-hand reminiscence from Michael Kelly, Lord Provost of Glasgow in 1981.

The video on 27 October marked the anniversary of the birth of O.R. Tambo who addressed 30,000 people on Glasgow Green in 1988 at the

Mandela March for Freedom.

He led the African National Congress (ANC) for almost 30 years. Following the Sharpeville Massacre and the banning of ANC in 1960, Tambo was sent abroad by the ANC to be their ambassador in organising the world-wide campaign to bring pressure on the South African apartheid government. He is credited with building the ANC's global mass campaign.

With clips of Tambo and contemporary comrades, the video hears first-hand accounts of issues like resistance, leadership, the armed struggle, sanctions, and negotiations.

Brian Filling, chair of the NMSMF, said he hoped the videos would: "remind people of the ANC's struggle, and Scotland's role in the fight against South Africa's apartheid system."

"The apartheid system in South Africa was based on white supremacism and cheap black labour making vast profits for the West, led and supported by Britain over decades."

You can see the videos at mandelascottishmemorial.org where you can also donate to the campaign.

## Online courses make training accessible to all

By Jennifer McCarey

Regional organiser (Education)

**U**NISON Scotland Learning and Organising Committee has moved many activists education courses online making them accessible to all UNISON members many of whom go on to become fully accredited UNISON representatives.

Between August 2020 and Aug 2021, we trained 407 new accredited UNISON stewards and health and safety reps.

In living rooms, kitchens, school offices, in the stock cupboard of a care home - these are examples of locations where our members trained and become qualified accredited reps during this pandemic.



**'It was a great course and I still feel like I really bonded with the other people on the course and the tutors, which I didn't expect to that extent. Lovely people, great course, I learned loads and really appreciate the tutors being available for follow-up.'** Stevie.

The move to online learning might have come easily to some but not for all. Some UNISON members are understandably nervous about joining courses online, and if you aren't used to working online or using computers this can be daunting.

However UNISON Scotland courses are designed so all paperwork is sent to your home in advance, and when you log on it becomes a face-to-face experience.

The courses are all structured, so the focus is on working in small groups, online, sharing ideas and solving problems together just like we do in branches.

A lack of experience using computers, or not having access to a tablet was a problem solved by branches all over Scotland who delivered equipment to homes, maintaining the principle that access to union rep training should be available to all our members equally.

UNISON Scotland has a unique approach to our rep training. We have always delivered training overseen and delivered by our lay tutor network - by activists just like you - alongside and in partnership with organising staff.

If you have members in your branch reluctant or nervous about training online get in touch with our activist education team.

Together we can put together a personalised plan making our courses a positive experience.

### We want to hear your news

SiU is your paper, we want to hear your stories. Contact Kate Ramsden (editor) [katearamsden@gmail.com](mailto:katearamsden@gmail.com), Danny Phillips [d.phillips@unison.co.uk](mailto:d.phillips@unison.co.uk), Trisha Hamilton [t.hamilton@unison.co.uk](mailto:t.hamilton@unison.co.uk)

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